

## **APPENDIX D**

### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/COORDINATION**



## United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
Washington, D.C. 20240

ADDRESS ONLY THE DIRECTOR  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

In Reply Refer To:  
FWS/DHC/BFA  
CCU 97-02009

26 NOV 1997

Honorable Phil Gramm  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gramm:

Thank you for your letter of September 5, 1997, also signed by Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz, requesting that the Fish and Wildlife Service provide information about the proposal to reopen Packery Channel near Corpus Christi, Texas. An identical letter is being sent to each signatory. Your letter asked for specific responses to two issues as they relate to the Federal significance of the project.

### Ecological Issues

In the mid-1980s, while searching for alternatives to offset the impacts of construction of the U.S. Navy's Homeport project at Point Ingleside, Texas, the Fish and Wildlife Service assessed the potential salinity-related effects of reopening Packery Channel. Using models designed to predict salinity effects on the brown shrimp and the spotted sea trout, we estimated that the reopening's impact on these species would adequately mitigate the Navy project's impacts. The Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department all recommended the alternative of reopening the channel to the Navy, and we drafted a portion of the Homeport Environmental Impact Statement explaining its modeling results.

Shrimp, trout, threatened piping plovers, and other species would benefit from the reopening. The moderation in the Upper Laguna Madre's salinity caused by mixing its waters with the less saline waters of the Gulf of Mexico would be accompanied by a moderation of the cooler lagoon's temperature. We expect that these changes will encourage the growth of smooth cordgrass and black mangroves, and promote habitat diversity without displacing habitats important to species like the piping plover. Oysters historically thrived in the washover pass areas at the southern end of Mustang Island when Packery Pass and nearby passes were open, but became scarce in the high Laguna Madre salinities that prevailed when the passes closed. Permanently reopening the channel is expected to once more ensure that live oyster reefs are a feature of Kate's and Deadman's Holes, two popular fishing sites in Laguna Madre near Packery Channel.

When the Army Corps of Engineers permit was issued in 1988, the reopening did not affect any federally threatened and endangered species. However, when the permit was renewed in 1994, the piping plover, a species known to occur in the project area, had been added to the Federal threatened list. The Fish and Wildlife Service and the Corps formally consulted over the possible effects of the reopening and found the proposed action was unlikely to jeopardize the continued existence of the piping plover. The Fish and Wildlife Service's biological opinion noted that a few foraging piping plovers in the Packery Pass vicinity would be displaced by the reopening and associated increased human activities nearby. However, the Fish and Wildlife Service found that because the reopening would increase the tidal amplitude near the pass, the plover and other shorebirds would likely benefit from a net increase in feeding habitat.

#### Recreational Opportunities

The project, as planned, will be beneficial although a number of tradeoffs exist regarding recreation and other issues. Fishing at Packery Pass is normally confined to people who can wade in the surf or the lagoon west of Mustang Island, or operate boats in those areas. Fishing in this area conflicts with other recreational activities because of the surfing pier and an associated recreation area on the surf side of the pass. Those attempting to fish northwest of the pass have long hikes, and have sometimes driven vehicles through piping plover concentration areas in an attempt to shorten the distance. Handicapped fishers are virtually eliminated from surf and lagoon fishing sites by the soft sands and muds at these locations. If Packery Channel were reopened as proposed, the walk would be only a few feet from a vehicle to fishing waters. Judging from similar conditions created temporarily at the Mustang Island Fish Pass, the reopened Packery Channel should provide increased fishing opportunities.

The project would provide improved safety for small watercraft operations. Currently, boaters have an hours-long task of crossing the Upper Laguna Madre and Corpus Christi Bay twice each time they put to sea. With Packery Channel open and maintained to a depth of eight feet, the project provides safety to small craft by allowing boats from Lake Padre, Padre Isles, and Laguna Shores channel subdivisions to be at sea in minutes and be back in calm waters sooner when the weather deteriorates. The project would also provide benefits to bird watchers. For example, bird watching platforms, wooden walkways, interpretive displays, and a gated parking area for school field trips are planned for the high ground at the site.

The sand removed during the project's initial and maintenance dredging can be used to restore beach and vehicular access to a heavily eroded stretch in front of the North Padre Island seawall a few thousand feet south of Packery Channel. Other proposed uses of the dredged sand include construction of dunes to enhance North Padre Island's hurricane protection and aesthetic features. The surfing pier and the J.P. Luby Park lie in the project's path. It has been proposed that both be moved to a location south of the seawall. A large parking lot has also been proposed at this site to reduce vehicle traffic on the beach in front of the seawall.

Honorable Phil Gramm

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Other Issues

There are three areas of uncertainty that should be considered concerning the project. They are 1) sediment balance, 2) salinity, and 3) secondary development. There is concern that the engineering analyses, which resulted in a favorable model of potential currents and sediment balance, underestimated the maintenance volumes and long-term costs of the project. The engineering analyses also indicated that the expected salinity changes may not extend as far into the Laguna Madre as first thought. In consultation with the Corps, the Fish and Wildlife Service also considered the issue of the reopening's potential to encourage secondary development on the barrier island. The consultation concluded that while the reopening would likely accelerate the pressure for secondary development, the wetland, flood insurance, and dune protection laws would make development unlikely. These uncertainties do not significantly affect our position that the ecological effects of reopening the Packery Channel are likely to be beneficial overall.

If you have any further questions regarding this project, please feel free to contact Ms. Nancy Kaufman, our Southwest Regional Director, at 505/248-6282.

Sincerely,

JAMIE RAPPAPORT CLARK

DIRECTOR

IDENTICAL LETTERS TO:

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison  
Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
GALVESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 1229  
GALVESTON, TEXAS 77553-1229

August 17, 2000

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

Environmental Branch

## **Notice of Studies and Initial Public Scoping Meeting for Packery Channel-North Padre Island Storm Damage Reduction and Environmental Restoration Project Corpus Christi, Texas**

### ***Introduction***

This notice provides a summary of the ongoing study activities for the Packery Channel-North Padre Island Storm Damage Reduction and Environmental Restoration Project, Corpus Christi, Texas and solicits public input regarding the study. The local sponsor for this project is the City of Corpus Christi.

### ***Study Background***

The project is located along the south-central Texas coast on the southern portion of Mustang Island. The project will provide storm damage reduction and environmental restoration by creating an opening between the Gulf of Mexico and Corpus Christi Bay, and placing excavated material in front of the Padre Island Seawall. The project channel will extend from the Gulf of Mexico through a jettied entrance and a channel through Mustang Island, east and adjacent to John F. Kennedy Causeway, therein to the existing Packery Channel, joining the main channel of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in the vicinity of mile 553.

Packery Channel has historically been an intermittent tidal inlet, but with continuing modifications to Aransas Pass associated with the Corpus Christi Ship Channel, Packery Channel has remained closed over at least the last 50 years. Local interests have indicated that the channel would also result in positive environmental benefits to the Upper Laguna Madre by increasing water circulation.

The Water Resources Development Act of 1999, Section 556, provides contingent authorization to construct the North Padre Island Storm Damage Reduction and Environmental Restoration Project, Texas, if the Secretary determines that the locally preferred plan (LPP) is technically sound and environmentally acceptable.

### ***Study Process***

The study involves conduct of sufficient engineering analysis and investigations to determine if the project design meets Corps' criteria and standards. Environmental baseline data are being assembled in order to address the

environmental acceptability of the LPP. The environmental acceptability statement will address the status of current environmental documentation and coordination of the project, identified and potential impacts, environmental benefits, and will identify appropriate National Environmental Policy Act compliance requirements for the project.

### ***Study Status***

The District is proceeding with studies to determine the technical soundness and environmental acceptability of the LPP at full Federal expense. The studies will result in a Project Report.

### ***Public Participation***

The Galveston District will hold the initial Public Meeting for the project on September 7, 2000. The purpose of the meeting will be to inform the community about the project and current studies. This notice serves as an invitation to the public to attend. The public will be provided an opportunity for comments.


**Location:** Bayfront Convention Center  
Room 220  
1901 N. Shoreline Blvd  
Corpus Christi, Texas

**Time:** 7:00pm – 9:00pm (Thursday, September 7, 2000)  
Registration to begin at 6:00pm

We are especially soliciting comments/concerns on environmental issues including:

Resources of particular concern;  
Opportunities for the beneficial uses of dredged material; and  
Development of a long-term disposal plan.

All interested parties are invited to provide input to this study so that all concerns may be addressed. If you wish to submit written comments or mailing list updates please send them to the address shown on the first page of this notice. Your input is requested by September 29, 2000. If we can provide further information, contact the Project Manager, Mr. Carl Anderson, by phone at (409) 766-3914, or by email at [Carl.M.Anderson@swg02.usace.army.mil](mailto:Carl.M.Anderson@swg02.usace.army.mil).

  
Randy L. Turner  
Major, Corps of Engineers  
Acting District Engineer



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office  
9721 Executive Center Drive N.  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33702

September 29, 2000

Colonel Nicholas J. Buechler  
District Engineer, Galveston District  
Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 1229  
Galveston, Texas 77553-1229

Dear Colonel Buechler:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the notice of studies for the Packery Channel-North Padre Island Storm Damage reduction and Environmental Restoration Project Corpus Christi, Texas, advertised on August 17, 2000. The project purpose as stated in the public notice is to "provide storm damage reduction and environmental restoration by creating an opening between the Gulf of Mexico and Corpus Christi Bay, and placing excavated material in front of Padre Island Seawall." The proposed project is located on Packery Channel, a historically intermittent intertidal Gulf inlet on Mustang Island, Nueces County, Texas.

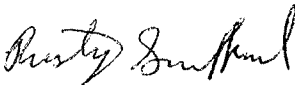
Representatives from NMFS and other Federal and State resource agencies participated in a meeting on February 22, 1999, to provide input on a proposed scope of work for studies to be utilized for the Corps Expanded Project Study Plan for this project. Major issues identified by NMFS included: 1) direct wetlands and seagrass habitat impacts; 2) indirect wetlands and seagrass impacts from erosion, channel scouring, tidal amplitude changes, or salinity alterations; 3) management of dredged material; and 4) cumulative impacts to wetlands and seagrasses on and around Mustang and North Padre Islands from future development (e.g., marinas, canal subdivisions and recreational boat access channels) that will occur as a result of the dredging of Packery Channel.

In addition to our previous comments, the National Environmental Policy Act statement being prepared by for the project should identify Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) located in the project vicinity, potential adverse impacts to EFH, and proposed mitigation options to offset adverse impacts to EFH. Detailed information on Federally managed fisheries and their EFH is provided in the 1998 amendment of the Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf of Mexico prepared by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. The 1998 generic amendment was prepared as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (P.L. 94-265).



If we may be of further assistance, please contact Mr. Rusty Swafford of our Galveston Facility at (409) 766-3699.

Sincerely,

  
for Andreas Mager, Jr.  
Assistant Regional Administrator  
Habitat Conservation Division

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
GALVESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 1229  
GALVESTON, TEXAS 77553-1229

January 14, 2002

RECEIVED

JAN 17 2002

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Environmental Section

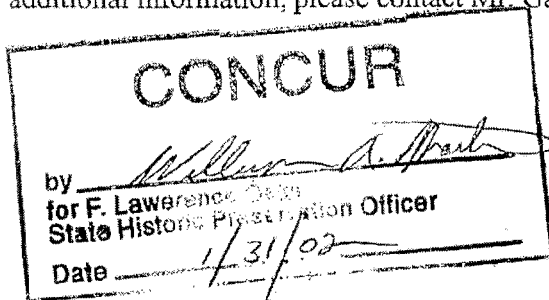
Dr. James E. Bruseth  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Division of Archaeology  
Texas Historical Commission  
P.O. Box 12276  
Austin, Texas 78711-2276

Dear Dr. Bruseth:

Enclosed is a letter report documenting the cultural resource survey for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District, proposed North Padre Island Storm Damage Reduction and Environmental Restoration Project, Packery Channel, Nueces County, Texas. Work, performed by PBS&J, included inventory for both terrestrial and underwater resources. Survey of the initial location of Placement Area No. 6 (PA 6) located site 41NU255 near the northeast corner of the placement area. Subsequently PA6 was redesigned to avoid site 41NU255 and PBS&J performed a cultural resource inventory within the boundaries of the redesigned placement area. During that inventory one biface fragment was found in a shovel test at 94cm below the surface near the water table. Six other shovel tests in the area of the biface fragment failed to find any other cultural material. It appears that the single biface fragment is an isolated artifact and not eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

A remote sensing survey was conducted offshore of the mouth of the proposed channel, in the terrestrial area to be affected by the construction of the proposed channel, and within the existing channel. While anomalies were encountered during the remote sensing survey none of these resembled any anomalies recorded over known shipwrecks.

Therefore, we request your concurrence with a finding of No Historic Properties Affected as per 36CFR Part 800(B(4)(d)(1) for the proposed project. If you have any questions, or require additional information, please contact Mr. Gary DeMarcey, of my staff, at (409)766-3878.



Sincerely,

Carolyn Murphy  
Chief, Environmental Section

Enclosure



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
GALVESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 1229  
GALVESTON, TEXAS 77553-1229

August 17, 2000

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Randy L. Turner  
Major, Corps of Engineers  
Acting District Engineer



## North Padre Island (Packery Channel), Nueces County, Texas

# Storm Damage Reduction and Environmental Restoration Project



Proposed Packery Channel looking toward Corpus Christi Bay.



Proposed Packery Channel looking toward the Gulf.

### Introduction

The City of Corpus Christi, TX, local sponsor for the project, has expressed an interest in reopening Packery Channel. The local sponsor has developed a plan, known as the locally preferred plan, consisting of a jettied entrance extending 1400 feet into the Gulf of Mexico and a channel 140 feet wide and 9 feet deep. The channel would extend from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in Corpus Christi Bay in the area of the previous channel.

### Project Status

The Galveston District has reviewed the local sponsor's preferred plan for the reopening of Packery Channel. A Project Report was prepared and sent to Corps headquarters (HQ USACE) in December 2000. The report indicated that the local sponsor's plan was technically sound, but did not meet Corps of Engineers standards and criteria. The report also stated that environmental acceptability could only be determined after completion of the environmental studies and preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The District has been given approval to proceed with a redesign of the local sponsor's plan for the reopening of Packery Channel to meet Corps of Engineers standards and criteria. The District is also continuing with the environmental studies and the preparation of an EIS. Estimated time to complete these processes is approximately 16 months.

Although the initial wave modeling study performed in 1996 conformed to Corps of Engineers criteria, the criteria was changed in 1998. A new wave model study will be conducted in accordance with the new criteria using 25 years of historical data. Purpose of the model is to determine sediment transport along the coastline which will result in the design length and orientation of the rock jetties, requirements for renourishment of the beach on the south side of the jetties and the frequency of the cycles for maintenance dredging. Upon completion of the redesign, a new cost estimate will be developed for construction and cost of maintenance.

dredging.

### Public Involvement

The initial Corps' sponsored public scoping meeting was held on September 7, 2000 at the Bayfront Plaza Convention Center in Corpus Christi, Texas. Several people spoke in the open forum, both for and against the project. All comments were recorded officially by a court reporter. Written comments were also accepted for a 30 day period following the scoping meeting. All concerns are being considered in the formulation of the redesign of the project.

Additional public meetings will be scheduled during the preparation of the EIS. All meetings will be advertised in advance in the local newspapers. Anticipate that the next public meeting will be scheduled in the October-November time frame.

### Project History

A Reconnaissance Report was completed in December 1998 identifying a Federal interest in pursuing feasibility studies for environmental restoration. Nueces County, the local sponsor at that time, had already contracted for several major engineering and environmental studies, in anticipation of possibly constructing the reopening of Packery Channel as a permit action. The plan that had been developed by Naismith Engineering, Inc. for Nueces County, became known as the local sponsor's preferred plan. In March 2000, the City of Corpus Christi became the local sponsor for the project in an agreement with Nueces County.

The Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (WRDA 99) directed the Secretary to carry out a project for ecosystem restoration and storm damage reduction at North Padre Island, if the Secretary determined that the work is technically sound and environmentally acceptable. Pursuant to this legislation, the District received guidance from HQ USACE to develop a Project Report to determine if the sponsor's locally preferred plan was technically sound and environmentally acceptable. The report was completed and forwarded to HQ USACE in December 2000 stating that the project was technically sound, but did not meet Corps of Engineers standards and criteria and that environmental acceptability could only be determined after completion of the EIS process. Based upon this report, the District was given approval to proceed with efforts to bring the sponsor's plan into compliance with Corps of Engineers standards and to continue with the environmental studies.

#### The POC for this page is:

Public Affairs Office  
CESWG-PA  
**SWG-PA@usace.army.mil**  
P.O. Box 1229  
Galveston, TX 77553-1229

#### Standard Disclaimers

Please read this privacy and security notice.



Updated: October 12, 2001